

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2010

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Thomas Bradford

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Berry

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill
Ann Moore

DHS Representative: Steve Jones

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Francine Crain, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Robert Lamb, Matt Lyles, Carol Marshall, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Roberta Vontungeln, Donna Walker, Cassandra Williams,

CALL TO ORDER. Vice-Chairman Ms. Anglyn Young called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mr. Gary Hall to approve the agenda. Mr. Gerald Carr seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

APPROVAL OF 12/11/09 MINUTES. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the minutes. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Congressional Action - HR734, the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act or "*Quiet Cars*" has gained 54 co-sponsors since last board meeting and stands at 222. The same trend is true with the corresponding legislation in the Senate - S841, which now has 28 co-sponsors. The *Tech Accessibility Act*, HR3101, known as the 21st Century Communications Act, has really picked up speed and is showing 42 co-sponsors, up from 24 last meeting.

RSA Commissioner - Lynnae Rutledge, Director of the Washington State VR program, has been confirmed as the new RSA Commissioner.

National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) - Assistant Director Cassandra Williams and I are scheduled to attend the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind meeting April 21-23, 2010. The meeting is focused on issues facing rehab agencies across the nation with a specialty in services to individuals who are blind. The group meets every six months to discuss programs and exchange best practices. I am honored to co-chair the employment committee for the upcoming conference and was discussing DSB's Consumer of the Year process during a recent planning meeting. The NCSAB president and the webmaster said they would be pleased to post some of the related news releases about DSB Consumer Successes which were written by Ms. Kandy Cayce of DSB. These have been forwarded to NCSAB and should be on the national website shortly.

STATE ISSUES:

Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind - Congratulations to the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind and Executive Director Bill Johnson on the 70th anniversary of the organization. A sizable crowd gathered at the Governor's Mansion last Thursday night to mark the occasion and attend the "Dining in the Dark" event hosted by Governor and Mrs. Beebe. The excellent meal was served in total darkness in the Grand Hall by staff and volunteers of the Lighthouse who are individuals with blindness or severe visual impairment. These volunteers also provided sighted guide service to participants in the darkened chamber. The event allowed diners to experience firsthand the difficulties faced by blind persons in similar settings and to appreciate the value of good skills training.

State Independent Living Council (SILC) - DSB continues to work with the SILC in completing the State Plan for Independent Living, which will go to RSA July 1. The plan outlines independent living services offered by Centers for Independent Living (CILS)

across the state and how general rehab and DSB plan to interact with that network in the coming three-year period.

Aerospace Summit - Next Thursday, Arkansas Workforce Services is sponsoring the Governor's Aerospace Summit which will involve many two and four year colleges, as well as aerospace business and industry. For the last several years there has been significant growth in aerospace educational programs in colleges across the state. I will be there to see how DSB consumers can become part of this rapidly developing education setting and ultimately part of the growing aerospace industry.

Local News Coverage by the Reading Service – DSB is concentrating its efforts to provide ease of access by consumers to NEWSLINE across the state, which has postponed the expansion of the rural news initiative for Arkansas Information Reading Service (AIRS). Once NEWSLINE is operating smoothly, staff can focus on setting up the system to provide access to the more rural newspapers and customized types of information of interest to persons who are blind or severely visually impaired.

DIVISION ISSUES

Consumer Outcomes – Performance indicators are reflecting the impact of the economic downturn, staff turnover and recruitment difficulties, particularly in vocational rehabilitation. VR successful closure is lagging behind 2009. However, older blind is doing well compared to 2009. It is common for the statistics to rise and fall as we move through the federal fiscal year, but the abnormally high number of vacancies due to stimulus funding, retirement, etc. is requiring double duty of staff at all levels.

Ethics Training – As follow up to the Accountability Training begun at WinRock last summer, DSB proceeded with Ethics Training recently. The response of staff was overwhelmingly positive. The training was very enlightening to many staff regarding ethical dilemmas, and situations faced daily by VR Counselors and where other staff responsibilities fall in those situations. I believe the best outcome of the training was a renewed sense of oneness, and an understanding that, no matter whether we work for DSB Field Services or Tech or Admin, we all work for the consumer.

Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS) – FAIRS is the advisory board that meets in support of the Reading Service and makes recommendations for its success. The group met yesterday to review the progress of the broadcast services, the telephone reader and the new computerized reading services that DSB began purchasing from NFB Newsline last July. DSB Rehabilitation Teachers are trained in assisting consumers to access the Reading Service and Newsline. All eligible consumers should take advantage of this service because it offers free access to over 300 magazines and newspapers across the nation and is a valuable tool in job acquisition and independent living.

Economic Stimulus – Several of the economic stimulus initiatives, described previously to the board, are moving along well, particularly the ***Job Development/Job Coach*** initiative. Director of the State Recovery Office, Mr. Chris Massingill, encountered Jonesboro Job Developer Mrs. Rhonda Simms recently during his visit to Paragould, where both had stopped for gas. After listening to Mrs. Simms explanation of how the program worked and what positive effect it was having on the local area, Mr. Massingill complimented Mrs. Simms and DSB at the subsequent monthly oversight meeting in Little Rock and encouraged DSB to blend this productive function into on-going services. DSB is pursuing this possibility with the Department. Of all the stimulus initiatives, Job Development/Job Coach is proving to be the most fruitful, in all locations, and DSB will continue to focus on it.

Other stimulus initiatives include the upgrade to a web-based environment for the ***Blind Services Information System***, which is on hold pending statistical needs assessment; ***Additional Computers for Web Access***, which are on order; ***Contracting with NFB for NEWSLINE*** as a special program of the Arkansas Information Reading Service, which is done; ***Case Record Audit***, which is proceeding well and the limited selection is almost complete; ***Targeted Staff Training***, which is complete; the ***Qualified Blind Apprentice initiative***, which is on hold pending positions; ***Purchase of Major Vending Equipment***, which is complete; ***Expansion of DSB Fleet***, which is moving forward and expected to be complete by June 30; ***Purchase of Services*** for Older Blind Consumers, which is progressing gradually as a supplement to the historically underfunded Older Blind program; and ***Accessible Computer Kiosks*** at the local workforce centers in ten locations, which are just beginning to be used by DSB consumers and staff for job search activities and itinerant meeting points.

Vendor's Quarterly Meeting – The Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors held their quarterly meeting February 6 to discuss recent vending issues. Discussion centered around the closure of the basement of the Federal Building in Little Rock. Under current requirements dictated by the General Services Administration (GSA), the location had proven unprofitable. When the location vacated recently, GSA asked VFP to replace the vendor immediately. However no vendors or potential vendors responded to solicitation. This gives GSA a five-year waiver to operate the location under the same requirements it applied to VFP, before the right to operation returns to VFP. It has been our experience that the design of the location does not produce enough traffic, considering the competition in the area, to make it a profitable concern. If GSA is able to make a reasonable profit, we will look at resuming the location in 2015.

ARS Vending Machines - The Rehab General Agency has moved from Brookwood to the Old Baptist Convention Building at 525 Capitol, and the Vending Facility Program is negotiating to provide vending machine services to the staff at the new location, per state law. So far Rehab continues plans to secure vending from an outside source.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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2009 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS (based on consumers of record as of 9/30/2008) - The results of the 2009 Consumer Satisfaction Survey were reported and an analysis of the 2009 responses and satisfaction rates for the three preceeding years are available on the DSB website at www.arkansas.gov/dhs/dsb/NEWDSB/index.htm. The 2009 overall satisfaction rate for Older Blind was 91.5%, while that of Vocational Rehabilitation was 87.5%.

CLARIFICATION OF EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR PROCESS 2010 – The committee recommended last year, and the board confirmed, that only fully completed nomination forms for staff employed at least one full year would be eligible for consideration by the committee for Employee of the Year. This information will be put on the web site.

DISCUSSION OF CONSUMER OF THE YEAR PROCESS 2010 – The committee reported that presentation is important on nominations for Consumer of the Year, and when nominations go forward to the committee, the scoring system needs to be made available in Braille whenever there are Braille users on the committee.

BOARD STIPEND TO NATIONAL CONSUMER MEETINGS – Mr. Dickie Walker moved that DSB use state travel procedures and the state per diem to reimburse board members for official business costs of authorized trips to the national consumer meetings each year. Ms. Irma Nelson approved the motion. *Motion Passed.*

DIRECTION OF DSB GOALS FOR 2011 STATE PLAN – Mrs. Donna Walker reported that DSB is in the process of developing the 2011 State Plan, based upon the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) that must be conducted by the Board every three years. The CSNA guide, developed by RSA, was shared by Mrs. Walker. The needs assessment instrument and related documents will be placed on the web to provide access and encourage response to the assessment. The results will be analyzed by the Needs Assessment Committee of the Board and documented in State Plan Attachment 4.11(a) and used as the basis for the 2011 state plan goals. Mrs. Walker reminded the board of the goals for the previous year (2010). These included:

- DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired;
- DSB will increase its services to transition students;
- DSB will continue to reach out to minorities and stakeholders;

Some of the strategies to reach those goals in the last year have involved:

- Acquiring job placement personnel & sponsoring job clubs
- Expanding Faith-based initiatives

- Developing brochures in Spanish & features in Hispanic publications
- Increasing Technology Services to consumers, and the tech skills of local staff

Mrs. Walker added that for 2011, we propose to develop goals and strategies based on the needs expressed by consumers, stakeholders and the staff in the 2010 Needs Assessment. The board committee and agency staff need to start working out critical points on how we are going to design the assessment and get the questionnaires out. We need to do a better job of getting people to attend the public forums to comment, and to attend meetings for the Needs Assessment. Mr. Gary Hall made a motion to accept the development design of the 2011 State Plan. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) – No representative was present. No report was submitted with the board packet.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC)
No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

ELECTION OF BOARD VICE-CHAIRMAN – Ms. Irma Nelson made a motion to re-elect Ms. Angyln Young as the Vice-Chairman. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

ELECTION OF SECRETARY – Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to re-elect Ms. Irma Nelson as Secretary. Ms. Angyln Young seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

CONSUMER INPUT – The Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) state convention will be held May 7-8, 2010 at the LaQuinta Inn at Otter Creek. The ACB National convention will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, July 9-17, 2010. The National Federal of the Blind (NFB) annual convention will be held July 2-8, 2010 in Dallas, Texas.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June 11, 2010, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary